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SUBJECT: CARICOM HOLDS MILITARY COMMANDERS MULTINATIONAL SECURITY MEETING

REF: PORT OF SPAIN 0170

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED; PLEASE PROTECT ACCORDINGLY

¶1. (SBU) Summary: Following up the April 4-5 CARICOM heads of government security meeting, the GOTT hosted in Port of Spain a June 13-14 "Caribbean Community Inaugural Technical Meeting of Military Commanders." A working-level USG interagency team from State, DoD, DHS and SouthCom participated. Though the conference was short on specifics, CARICOM officials displayed a willingness to engage international partners through a comprehensive regional security framework based on regional institutions and legal agreements. GOTT Minister of National Security Martin Joseph, who chaired the conference, pressed for several commitments but was only able to secure agreement to explore opportunities for greater international collaboration. For the USG, these initiatives include proposed exchange visits with the Joint Inter-Agency Task Force-South (JIATF-S) and a DoD-supported Commanders Estimate on illegal trafficking issues affecting the region, along with an assessment of resources existing/needed to counter this threat. With an eye on security for the upcoming April 2009 Summit of the Americas and later Commonwealth Heads meetings, CARICOM also intends to reestablish the International Support and Advisory Group and to convene a meeting of "intelligence practitioners." End Summary.

Meeting Kickoff

¶2. (SBU) The Ambassador led an interagency team from State, DoD, DHS and SouthCom to the CARICOM Inaugural Technical Meeting of Military Commanders on June 13 -14. The meeting was ceremonially kicked off by Prime Minister Manning who noted the centrality of security concerns to the region, the need for other nations to be concerned over the threat that uncontrolled crime/trafficking in the Caribbean might pose to them, and his intention to stay focused on this issue. He also announced CARICOM leaders would shortly sign their long-delayed Maritime and Airspace accord and a common arrest warrant treaty. The meeting was a follow-on session to the CARICOM Heads of Government April 4-5 security session. In a pre-conference discussion among the U.S., UK and Dutch delegations (the French and Canadians were unable to attend), it was agreed that we would only be active listeners, taking any recommendations or concerns back to policy-makers.

CARICOM Threat Assessment

13. (SBU) Helping to orient the conference, Barbados Defense Force Intelligence Major Millington made a presentation concerning the current threat. He highlighted narcotrafficking, arms trafficking, gang activities, irregular migration, deportees and transnational crimes such as terrorism, cyber-crime and money laundering. Lynne Anne Williams of CARICOM Implementation Agency for Crime and Security (IMPACS) then presented an outline describing the current CARICOM Security Framework. She noted IMPACS' ability to provide policy coordination while the Regional Security System (RSS), based in Barbados, provides operational support to the Eastern Caribbean

14. (SBU) Continuing on, she highlighted mechanisms already in place to enhance security such as the Advance Passenger Information System (APIS), the Joint Regional Communications Center (JRCC), the Regional Intelligence Committee (RIC), CARICOM Intelligence Sharing Network (CISNET), Regional Intelligence Fusion Center (RIFC), and the CARICOM Watchlist System (CAWS). She granted, however, that these measures are not fully utilized. For example, some CARICOM members have not passed permanent APIS legislation following its temporary use during the 2007 Cricket World Cup (CWC). (Note: During PM Manning's opening remarks, he specifically pressed non-CWC CARICOM members to commit to joining the APIS initiative. End Note.) She further added that information sharing is often disjointed and incomplete. The overall concepts are sound, but a coherent strategy is lacking that would leverage international partner support or integrate with existing multinational information/intelligence sharing apparatus.

Areas of Possible Co-Operation

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15. (SBU) The agenda called for a presentation on the draft CARICOM Maritime and Airspace Security Cooperation Agreement. Even though this item was assumed to be the focus of the meeting, CARICOM would only say that the agreement would be signed in July. No additional details were provided. The U.S., UK and Dutch delegations all stated they supported the concept according to the draft circulated in July 2007; however, policy and legal considerations prohibited further comment until the final document became available for review (especially as CARICOM officials said the 2007 draft had been substantially modified).

16. (SBU) Conference chair Joseph then moved to discuss regional assets. However, instead of enumerating CARICOM assets, the expectation was for Canada, France, The Netherlands, the UK and the U.S. to list the assets they could commit to support Caribbean nations. Specifically, CARICOM indicated a desire for vessels to patrol the Eastern Caribbean on a continual basis. In response, the U.S. delegation expressed willingness to discuss ways to assess and complement regional capabilities and deployments, but noted the need to channel cooperation through JIATF-S and its efforts to stem illicit trafficking throughout the Caribbean. Other outside countries took a similar stance, declining to commit resources at this time.

Concluding Statement

17. (SBU) At the close of the conference, a concluding statement/press release was issued that noted the meeting had established that opportunities exist for strengthening security cooperation in the areas of operational planning. Among action items mentioned in the statement were to schedule exchange visits between CARICOM and JIATF-S to explore partnerships, to conduct a command estimate on illegal trafficking in the region and to identify resources to counter this threat (including potentially through working groups). Specifically with reference to the 2009 Summit of the Americas and Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting, the statement called for the reestablishment of the International Support and Advisory Group and the convening of a meeting of "intelligence practitioners."

Comment: A first step

18. (SBU) CARICOM officials made clear throughout the two-day meeting their view that much responsibility for Eastern Caribbean illicit trafficking (and associated social woes/crime) lies with consumer nations, primarily the U.S., Canada and Western Europe. As such, it was incumbent on these nations to help in the fight to bolster regional security. Though the session at times seemed like a donors meeting where the CARICOM hosts neglected to tell their non-regional guests in advance that there was an entrance fee, the conference righted itself after a bit of awkwardness and was a useful step in creating/fortifying a coordinated regional security architecture and plan.

19. (U) A draft of this cable was cleared by some, though not all, USG meeting participants.

Austin